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SUBJECT

Post-Election Violence in Bolivia

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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

The following report furnishes background information on the post-election civil disturbance which took place in Bolivia on 1, 2, 3 May 1949.

- 1. As previously reported, the MNR planned to create serious civil disturbances on or before the 1 May elections and to exploit the resulting situation to the maximum, overthrowing the government if possible.*
- 2. This plan depended on mass action of factory workers, miners, and peasants.** Sufficient arms were in the hands of the civilian populace to produce acts of violence.***
- 3. The government, through its agents, was aware of these plans. Hence, what is described as a large sum of money was spent to undermine Juan Lechin's influence with the miners at Catavi. **** As a result, the threatened uprising of the Catavi miners on May Day was avoided.
- 4. Likewise, when the expected mass strike and demonstration of factory workers was materializing in La Paz on 2 May, the government was able to win over Hovimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MIR) organizer and agitator Florentino Quiroz by a payment of money. As a result, Quiroz went on the government radio at noon 2 May and urged the factory workers to abstain from violence or any political activity. Quiroz also prevented mass demonstrations of factory workers on 2 May and later.
- 5. The shooting started in the Plaza Murillo shortly after 6:00 p.m. on 1 May, when a group of Partido de la Union Socialista Republicana (PUSR) demonstrators and a group of INR demonstrators crossed paths. Hany individuals in both groups, especially these of the MRR, were armed. It is reported that the first blow was struck by the PUCR, which account agrees with other reports received. At any event, the two groups attacked each other with gunfire, knives, and any object at hand. The police intervened on the side of the PUGR and the fighting continued for several hours, leaving a number dead and many wounded.
- 6. Prior to this fraces, the MNR mob had been harangued by INR candidates Hernan Ciles Zuazo and Federico Alvarez Plata. FUSR candidates Julio Tellez Reyes and Carlos Gonzalo Saavedra had likewise addressed their demonstrators. It is

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reported that Tellez Reyes was armed and was seen to shoot at least one person, with believed fatal results. This incident may well affect the moral and legal position of the government, since Tellez Reyes was elected to the House of Deputies on the PUSR ticket. The Minister of Interior has ordered that MNR candidates Hernan Siles Zuazo, Mario Diez de Medina, and Federico Alvarez Plata be tried in criminal court for their part in the riot.

- 7. It is the general belief in the MNR that Minister of Public Works, Guillermo Gutierrez Vea Murguia fired on the MNR demonstrators with a machine gun from the window of a government building. Gutierrez is a Partido Izquierda Revolucionaria (PIR) adherent.
- 8. During the fighting in the Plaza Murillo a number of homemade dynamite bombs were set off. This explosive had been brought from the mines by Juan Lechin's miners. The automobile of the Director General of Internal Revenue was destroyed by one such bomb.
- 9. A car belonging to the Prefect of La Paz was set loose down a street leading from the plaza. This was reportedly done by MNR-Villarroelista supporters Jorge Pabon and Oscar Altamirano. The ear struck a group of people, killing two and injuring eight.
- 10. The violence spread from the main plaza to the Chijini district, where an MNR mob attacked and captured the Lima Sub-station, killing one policeman and injuring others. The sub-station was later recaptured by the government. MNR fighters also attempted to take the Chijini Section police station, but were repelled.
- 11. As a result of these incidents, the state of siege was declared again in force throughout the country.
- 12. Sporadic firing continued throughout the night.
- 13. At 11:30 a.m. on 2 May striking factory workers entered the Plaza Murillo and attacked police stationed there. Gunfire ensued and at least one person was killed and several injured. The plaza was cleared by the police.
- 14. The government took an extremely grave view of the situation at this point because of the mass demonstration of factory workers scheduled for 3:00 p.m., 2 May. However, as described above, Quiroz was induced to go on the government radio and pacify the workers.
- 15. By 3 May heavy reinforcements of army troops had been brought up to the Altojust outside of La Paz and all police positions were heavily manned. Consequently, no serious trouble developed when the funerals of the various victims were held on the afternoon of 3 May.
- 16. A meeting of MNR leaders was called for 2:30 a.m. 3 May, at which Mario Diez de Medina, among others, was present. There was general agreement that the MNR was insufficiently armed to attack the government forces head-on at the present stage of things.
- 17. The MNR operated a clandestine radio station for several days, using broadcast frequencies 1550 and 1370 and shortwave bands 25m and 49m. Government efforts to locate the station have been without success, and the transmitter is moved frequently.



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- 18. The number of casualties has been reported in the newspapers as from 8 to 10 dead and 75 to 85 wounded. However, these figures are believed to reflect a government effort to minimize the bloodshed. Casualties were distributed among police, PUSR, MRR, PIR, factory workers, and bystanders, with the police probably suffering worst.
- 19. This resort to violence on the part of the MNR immediately after a victory at the polls has caused considerable surprise and comment in La Paz. However, as previously reported, the MNR planned to resort to violence in the event of a victory at the polls in La Paz, since this was interpreted to mean that sufficient popular support existed to make mob action successful.*****

 This is still the opinion of the high commend in La Paz, the problem now being to obtain sufficient arms.



